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August 11, 2000

Donna Shalala
Secretary, H.H.S.
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

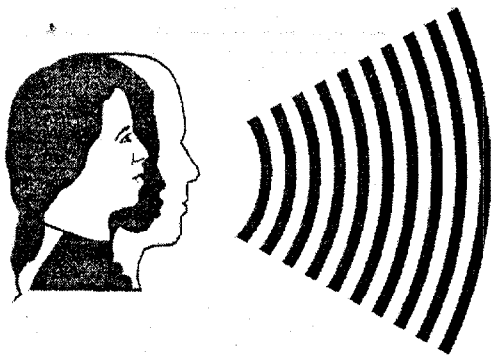
I am writing to express my concern about the possible weakening of labeling requirements for irradiated food that is being considered by the Food and Drug Administration. I strongly believe that it is my right to know if the food I serve my family has been treated with radiation.

77% of Americans do not want to buy irradiated food. It is the government's role to protect consumers, not assist the meat industry in their efforts to trick us. Please defend the consumer's right to know.

Mary H. Shaud
(Mrs.) Mary H. Shaud
105 Conoy Ave.
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Your Right To Know Threatened

The Consumers' Voice

P.O. Box 84010, Lincoln NE 68501

Recently the Department of Agriculture added meat to the list of foods that it allows to be irradiated. Since 77% of Americans say they would refuse to eat food exposed to nuclear material, until now food has rarely been irradiated. As part of their efforts to get you to eat irradiated foods, the meat industry is attempting to convince the Food and Drug Administration to remove the labeling requirement, removing the public's right to know and choose.

Food irradiation is a process by which meat, fruit, vegetables and other food products are exposed to large doses of ionizing radiation. When radiation strikes food material, it transfers its energy, changing the molecular structure of food, leaving positively and negatively charged particles called ions or "free radicals." The ions are chemically active and easily recombine or initiate chemical reactions with surrounding materials.

The move to introduce irradiated food is part of a misguided approach to eliminate bacteria such as *E.coli* and extend the shelf life

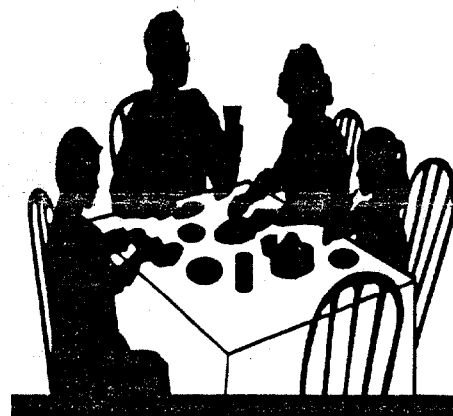
of food. Food irradiation raises concerns that include long-term health impacts, environmental problems, nuclear accidents, the public's right to know and worker safety. The root causes of food-borne illness are filthy conditions at factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses. Irradiation will not compensate for unhealthy and inappropriate food processing procedures that leave feces on the meat.

However, irradiation will:

- * Reduce the nutritional quality of food, specifically decreasing vitamins A, C, E and some B complex vitamins.
- * Make older food look newer.
- * Create a new class of unique radiolytic products such as benzene, a known carcinogen.
- * Create new volumes of toxic radioactive waste.

In a recent poll 92% of Americans said they want irradiated food to be labeled. Like other labels required by federal law, irradiation labels must be truthful and not misleading. How-

ever, through such outlets as Wal-Mart, the grocery and meat industry is in the midst of a campaign to confuse the public into thinking that irradiated food carries safety benefits that outweigh the risks. Wal-Mart's attempt to advertise irradiated food as "safe" is a complete distortion. Proposals to use euphemistic phrases like "cold pasteurization" are inappropriate because pasteurization is an entirely different process involving rapid heating and cooling.



"The bottom line is that food irradiation is not in the public interest," says Wenonah Hauter, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Food Safety. "Wal-Mart and others should focus their efforts on real improvements of food processing procedures."

Mrs. Mary Shaud
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